

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: A CHRONIQUE.

LONDON, February 21st, 1908.

By far the most remarkable and ominous event in foreign politics for a very long period has been the open rupture of the *entente* between Austria and Russia. No critic outside the Ballplatz and perhaps the Wilhelmstrasse has offered any comment which satisfies us that the inwardness of this mysterious episode has been penetrated. But it is certain that the *status quo* in the Near East, after a decade of quiescence almost causing the world to forget the true character of that question, has been openly attacked at last. The Kaiserstadt on the Danube has once more become the centre of political interest in a way that had hardly been known for a generation. The position may turn out, of course, to be one of perilous prominence, and Baron Aehrenthal may have overcalculated his strength. But has his long and intimate knowledge of Russian affairs, gained while he was ambassador upon the Neva, convinced him that the power of the Tsardom may be safely defied? Has he been forced to act in the knowledge that some coup was secretly preparing in another quarter? Has he moved upon the calculation that recent tendencies, if not checked and, to a certain extent, reversed, would bar the way to the Aegean, and create a big Bulgaria stretching like an iron rampart across the historic route towards the south and the sea? These are searching and even fascinating problems.

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Newspapers in every capital were filled for a few days with suggestions not only of inevitable, but of immediate war. These are excited imaginings, not unreasonable in their view of the probable development of events, but altogether premature with respect to the length of time required for the process. The apprehensive mind telescopes the future. The world is full of prophets whose instinct for the real trend and ultimate consequences of events is almost unerring. But there are perhaps not three persons in any one nation at any one time who are really good and sure judges of the time at which will occur the developments quite accurately predicted in other respects. That is why prophecy ought never to mention precise dates unless desirous of exposing itself to the most ignominious results of the most gratuitous form of folly. There is a feeling, and it is undoubtedly well-founded, that henceforth the peace of Europe is less secure, and that the Near East has again become more dangerous than Manchuria or Morocco. But war in the next few years is doubtless excluded for this reason, that Russia is not in a position to strike, and can only begin to prepare.

Five years hence—or at the centenary of 1812, which will be one of the greatest of Russian national festivals—the position may be very different, and the tremendous repercussion of Baron Aehrenthal's action may be felt, if, indeed, his policy means what the majority of his critics have assumed.

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The sitting of the Austrian Herrenhaus on Mr. Meredith's birthday deserves to be called historic. At that sitting, Baron Aehrenthal deliberately denounced the Balkan compromise which has ensured the friendship of Vienna and St. Petersburg for the last ten years. He declared that all special association between the two capitals had come to an end, and had lost its reason of being, since other Powers had assumed an equal interest in Macedonian reforms. The irony of these words seems to lie in the fact that when Francis Joseph's Foreign Minister explained the Balkan compromise to have been superseded by the European Concert, he was perfectly well aware that the Concert had already ceased to exist. It was broken up by his own action in obtaining from the Sultan the Iradé for the link line through the sanjak of Novi-Bazar, giving the whole military power of the Hapsburg Empire direct access into Macedonia. To grasp the disquieting character of this move, we must remember what the Balkan Compromise has been and when it was concluded. It was originally arranged between Count Goluchowski and Prince Lobanoff, though not declared until just after the latter's death. The Emperor Francis Joseph visited St. Petersburg in April, 1897. Cordial toasts were exchanged. Upon the 29th of that month, Count Goluchowski—who was accompanying his Sovereign—and Count Muravieff, who had just taken over the Russian Foreign Office, issued a joint note to the Balkan States. The two Powers announced that they were resolved to act together for the security of peace, the preservation of order, and the maintenance of the *status quo*. Baron Aehrenthal now declares that the upholding of the *status quo* was contemplated solely in a political, and not in an economic, sense; but there was no reference to any limitation of that character in the original announcements. Count Goluchowski gave a perfectly simple explanation of the compromise in the course of an address, by far the most notable utterance of his long term of office, delivered before the Hungarian delegation towards the end of 1897. The passage is well worth quoting as it stands in the *Europäischer Geschichts-Kalender*:—

“ With Russia we have had a frank and loyal discussion, creating the conviction on both sides that there were no such differences between us as a little goodwill would fail to remove. This was seen to be the case as soon as it could be established that we both strive for the upholding of the *status quo*; that Russia no less than ourselves repudiates all thoughts of conquest in the Balkan Peninsula; and that there is on both sides a firm determination to respect the independence and self-development of the separate Balkan States

to the exclusion of every attempt at a preponderating influence. With this the ground was laid for an understanding between us. In these circumstances we soon came to perceive that our interests clashed in no way, but rather that as the Powers most intimately concerned by Oriental unrest, we had every reason to hold together and to keep steadily in touch. Under condition of the strictest observance of this principle, we are ready to cherish the closest understanding with Russia, and we confidently recognise, therefore, in the recent relations so happily prepared, a new and potent guarantee for the peace of Europe."¹

There was no question here, it will be seen, of economic rivalries remaining open. The self-denying ordinance was complete on both sides. The two Eastern Empires undertook to work together and to abjure all special advantages. It is not probable that Count Goluchowski had a more limited purpose in his mind. We imagine that he never shared the most fallacious of all Bismarckian ideas—that economic antagonism may be easily combined with political friendship. Upon the contrary, in this very speech Count Goluchowski went on to express his conviction that economic struggles were about to dominate politics and to decide the future of the world. There can be very little doubt that the distinction now drawn by Baron Aehrenthal expresses a difference not present to the mind of either of the contracting parties when the Balkan compromise was originally concluded.

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Before examining the working of that compact, let us see why moral importance was attached to it, and why its disappearance seems like removing the foundation-stone of the structure of European peace. For generations no rivalry in international politics had seemed so fatalistic and implacable as the antagonism between Russia and Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. No method of reconciling their claims had ever been suggested in a form to impress any responsible mind. The great issue, it was assumed—perhaps rightly, as we see—must be decided sooner or later in arms. At that time the obsolete system of Bismarckian diplomacy remained unshaken. There was a Dual Alliance. There was a Triple Alliance. England maintained towards the latter group an attitude slightly warmer than friendly neutrality. The Cretan problem had been acute. A crisis upon the Nile was approaching. The seizures of Port Arthur and Kiachou were at hand, and signs of trouble in South Africa were thickening. For years the tendency of all the most serious thought in Europe had been anxious and alarmist. One significant little event had happened. Prince Bismarck in his wrath had revealed, to Austro-Hungarian indignation, the history of his secret treaty with St. Petersburg. It has often been suggested that this memorable indiscretion was the originating cause of the new atti-

(1) *Schulthess: Europäischer Geschichts-Kalender*, 1897, p. 211.

tude of the Ballplatz towards St. Petersburg. But that can scarcely have been more than one contributory factor. The agreement was mainly demanded in the interests of Russia herself. She was concentrating upon the Trans-Siberian railway. She was committed irrevocably to the fatal adventure in the Far East. For the time, the mission of the Tsardom to the Christian subjects of the Sultan was forgotten, and domination on the Pacific promised to realise a new and more glorious dream. But it was essential to Russia, if she was to act with free hands at the extremes of Asia, that her interests in the Near East should not be seriously endangered. Hence the agreement was regarded with as much satisfaction in St. Petersburg as at Vienna. The racial troubles in Austria itself were entering upon their gravest phase, and the Danubian Empire desired nothing better than to see its mighty neighbour engaging itself as far away as possible from the Black Sea and as near as possible to the Yellow Sea. The agreement was well understood to be provisional—it has, as a matter of fact, lasted longer than anyone expected when it was signed—but for quite different reasons it was vitally and equally to the interests both of St. Petersburg and Vienna when concluded.

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And, above all, it inaugurated a new system. Cross-bracing became the most popular device in diplomacy. What the Iron Chancellor had practised secretly was openly imitated by Power after Power. The Balkan compromise of 1897 was the first of those *ententes* between countries nominally in opposite camps which have become as important a feature of international policy as the alliances themselves. Germany and Austria were pledged to defend each other against Russia, but were both bound by separate arrangements to the same Power. M. Delcassé thereupon commenced his slow and masterly work. The long feud between the two Latin Powers was closed, and Italy and France were united by one *entente cordiale* which made another possible. Next, the Edwardian system began to rise, and in a few years we found ourselves the centre of the widest system of alliances, friendships, and agreements which our foreign policy had ever succeeded in constructing. But the whole of this unprecedented fabric, based upon the ruins of Bismarck's diplomatic system as it was, dated from the laying of the foundation-stone by the Balkan compromise. The good results have made themselves felt to increasing purpose in the last ten years, but if any serious effort were made to shake the fabric, one wing or the other must collapse. This, in brief, is the record of the Austro-Russian understanding in its bearing upon international relations at large as distinguished from its effects first upon the local problems in the Near East, and secondly upon the relative positions of the two Powers immediately concerned.

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It would be unnecessary to trace the results in detail. For a number of years Russian attention was wholly engrossed by events in the Far East, and Russian diplomacy did not break its word. The Bagdad railway scheme was launched, and still no effective answer came from St. Petersburg. It seemed that the self-denying ordinance was exercising a paralysing influence upon the Balkan policy of St. Petersburg to the rapid aggrandisement of Berlin. At last the misery of Macedonia cried aloud, and Russia again heard a voice to which she had long been deaf. The Mürzsteg programme was constructed. The tedious and prolix narrative of "the reforms" began. The Concert of Europe was nominally restored upon the understanding that in all cases unanimity should be shown by the spectacle of Austria-Hungary and Russia moving in front of the remaining Powers. In a word, the slowest steam-roller ever set in motion by international efforts began to revolve, and it has continued to work forward at the rate of an inch a year. We cannot say that much has been done. But something has been done for the Macedonian populations without endangering the peace of the world. Ineffectual measures have at least sketched out clearly the lines upon which efficient remedies might be applied. The Macedonian gendarmerie were placed under the supervision of European officers. The Macedonian finances were placed under the supervision of the International Commission. The problem of supervising the tribunals and securing cleaner justice was approached at last. Sir Edward Grey, whose handling of the whole question had been sane and firm throughout, proposed almost simultaneously with the project of judicial reforms that the scope and efficiency of the gendarmerie should be increased. The Sultan resisted these later hapless projects with more subtle desperation than he had thrown into his resistance to the measures previously forced upon him.

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In the discussion, however, of the legal reforms and the improvements in the gendarmerie, the European Concert went suddenly to pieces, and almost immediately afterwards the partnership between Austria-Hungary and Russia was abruptly and publicly dissolved. It is at this point that we lose the thread, and the present writer confesses that he has failed as yet to frame any convincing theory of the inward significance of these events. But if we follow Bishop Butler's wise warning not to go beyond the plain and obvious meaning of things, what shall we conclude? The most commonplace explanation may be the true one. Baron Aehrenthal may have convinced himself or been convinced by Prince Bülow that events in the Balkan Peninsula were marching too fast; that they were moving towards the objective of a practically autonomous Macedonia; that they were tending, therefore, to the ultimate creation of a Big Bulgaria; and that Austrian prospects of finally reaching the sea

at Salonika were once more threatened with an eclipse as complete as if the treaty of San Stefano had never been torn to pieces, and the Berlin Congress had never been held. This is the obvious suggestion. It is most likely the true one. There is no doubt that, without any positive effort on the part of Russia in violation of her engagements, the *status quo* was insensibly but surely changing to the disadvantage of Vienna, and still more perhaps to the distaste of Berlin. The split among the Powers revealed itself for the first time (according to the well-known correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* at St. Petersburg) in the councils of the ambassadors at Constantinople. Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, with his usual resource, denounced upon high moral grounds the proposal to subject judicial proceedings in Macedonia to the supervision of the administrative body. The German Ambassador declared that all civilisation had repudiated the principle proposed. This would have been more convincing in regard to courts at the Hague than to tribunals in Macedonia. In India the judicial and the administrative powers in their lower stages are not separated. In Egypt we have set up with the utmost benefit to the people something like the system proposed in Macedonia. Our administration has had to train the Egyptian tribunals in the art of dealing out clean and intelligent justice.

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Baron Marschall's contention of course involves nothing more than a plausible play upon words. The issue was whether the Macedonian tribunals were to be subject, as now, to a partisan and corrupt executive, or whether they should be watched and cleansed by a pure and disinterested administration. But behind the legal debate there were other preoccupations. Equality before the law in Macedonia would mean an end practically of the dominion of the Turk. Had the judicial reforms been accepted, Sir Edward Grey's plea for a more effective direction of the gendarmerie by the foreign officers might in its turn have been pressed, and might have succeeded. That would have meant nothing more nor less in reality—no matter what it might be called nominally—than the pacification and emancipation of Macedonia. Under settled conditions the predominance of the Bulgarian majority among the inhabitants of Macedonia would have become stronger every day. The making of Bulgaria in the last quarter of a century has been one of the most notable things of its kind in European history since the foundation of Prussia. What might not this race do in another generation if the bands were put down and Macedonia became peaceably Bulgarised? The result might be to build a racial wall of concrete across the route to Salonika, and to shut off the Hapsburg monarchy from the port upon which her revived naval ambition is now unmistakably fixed. Berlin, of course, has at least an equal interest in the issue. The value of the route from Berlin to the Persian Gulf will largely depend upon the strength of the security

for a through connection in war and peace. At present a great stretch of that route passes over Bulgarian soil and is at the mercy of Prince Ferdinand's forces. An alternative line to Salonika and Constantinople is evidently essential in the opinion both of the Ballplatz and the Wilhelmstrasse.

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For the present their interests are united. Austria-Hungary feels that she must control in all circumstances the passage to Salonika. German statesmanship calculates that the separate commercial existence of Austria-Hungary is becoming impossible, and that the Dual Monarchy, whatever extensions of its nominally independent influence it may attempt or achieve, must be forced into a permanent Customs Union with Germany. Thus any advantages that may be won now for Francis Joseph's peoples will be enjoyed sooner or later by the subjects of William II. That is the calculation. To the vast majority of Germans it seems sound. And as the unity of their present Empire was created by the Zollverein before it was vindicated in the field, they hope that the vast federal monarchy of the future from Antwerp to the Persian Gulf will be created and disguised as a Customs Union before it is consolidated and revealed by war. It may be a far cry to the realisation of these ambitions, but not further than from the firm establishment of the Zollverein to the Imperial restoration of a generation later. Whatever may have been Baron Aehrenthal's motives, it is clear that he was a party to the breaking up of the Concert. He felt that the Balkan compromise had served its purpose. The time had come for Austria-Hungary to resume liberty of action. The end of the self-denying ordinance was proclaimed by the Sultan's Iradé consenting to the direct linking up of the Austrian and Ottoman railway systems by the construction of a short railway through the sanjak of Novi-Bazar. The anomalous position held by that little district since the Treaty of Berlin is well known. Strategically, the sanjak is the key of the Balkans. It is a diplomatic hybrid. It is under the civil administration of the Turks. It is under the military occupation of the Austrians. It may be regarded, as has been said, either as a wedge or as an opening. As a wedge, it is driven in between Montenegro and Servia to split the Serb race and to show that the unity of that stock never can be achieved unless all its branches become subjects or vassals of the Hapsburg Crown. As an opening, however, Novi-Bazar is the doorway to the Aegean. In Vienna they are contending, it is true, that the road must be of scant value because of lack of water. Austria, in the case of a crisis demanding the movement of masses of her troops towards the south, would have to force her way, if necessary, through Servia. But the second movement would be very much facilitated if the alternative route were in Austrian hands. From the present terminus of the Bosnian lines to railhead on Turkish territory at Mitrovitza stretches only a hundred miles of unmetalled ground. Commercial considerations

can hardly be pleaded. The route through Servia serves most economic purposes. Rates might, of course, be manipulated so as to make the new route from Serajero to Salonika a valuable factor in the extension of Austrian trade. And Servia would be more than ever in the grip of her great and remorseless neighbour. But the more momentous fact remains that the new connection with Mitrovitza will give Austria for the first time immediate military access into Macedonia.

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Nothing in one sense could be more legitimate than this. Article XXV. of the Treaty of Berlin contains the following passage with reference to the sanjak: "In order to assure the maintenance of the new political state of affairs, as well as freedom and security of communications, Austria-Hungary reserves the right of keeping garrisons and having military and commercial roads in the whole of this part of the ancient vilayet of Bosnia." This does not mention railways, but a moral claim to the new line might be strongly founded upon the words just quoted. The Sultan's consent was made necessary by the further terms of the twenty-fifth article. Vienna has always coveted direct railway communication with Salonika, but refrained from seeking the concession while the Balkan compromise remained valid. It is, of course, certain that the favour has only been obtained at a price. The Sultan has again triumphed by dividing. He has granted a railway in order to stop the reforms. In these questions the policy of Abdul Hamid is nothing for nothing. It is unthinkable that the *Irade* for the link line should have been issued so cheerfully by the Porte unless an adequate diplomatic bargain had been struck. Austria was sure of German support for several reasons. Firstly, it is to the interest of Germany that the reforms should be stopped. Secondly, the development of the Austro-Hungarian economic system is regarded, as we have said, as a possible asset to the German Empire. And, thirdly, compensation was due and had to be paid for Austria's services in acting as "a brilliant second" at Algeciras. The conjunction of circumstances, therefore, was tempting. Baron Aehrenthal must also have been more or less inspired by another process of reasoning. Let us glance back at this point upon his own personal record.

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When he was ambassador on the Neva he himself helped to negotiate the instrument which he has now destroyed. The German Press was accustomed to condemn him for his supposed Russophile tendencies, while at the same time drawing attention to the importance of his personality as a man of the future. When he was at last summoned to the Ballplatz in succession to Count Goluchowski, two very divergent theories were entertained. According to one of them, the new Foreign Minister in Vienna shared the views believed to be held by the heir-apparent, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, a

strong advocate of pacific co-operation with Russia. The other theory explained that Baron Aehrenthal would be acceptable to the Magyars, whose traditional views, though mitigated, have by no means become pro-Muscovite. But we shall not be far wrong in concluding that Count Goluchowski's successor was devoid of idealism on the question, and aimed only at such a policy as would prevent the way to the Aegean from being barred, and the eastern shore of the Adriatic from falling into Italian hands. Above all, his state of mind ten years ago might very well be modified in its bearing upon the relations of Austria and Russia by the results of the Manchurian War. Was no compensation to be obtained as a result of the temporary weakness of the Tsardom? Was no profit to be made from the offers of fortune? The temptation raised by the contemplation of the debility of Muscovite power was almost more than flesh and blood could stand. But several considerations caused action to be postponed. It was not at first thought that Russia would have been so badly beaten in the Far East. Then, however, it was not supposed that the Tsardom would so soon recover. The temper in Vienna was one of tolerable complacency. For the moment the looming menace across the Eastern frontier had disappeared, and the Russian Empire seemed fated to a long anarchy. In the last twelve months there has been a recovery as remarkable as the recovery of France after the Dreyfus case. There is the promise of steady progress upon moderate and monarchical lines such as may lead to a very solid system. But the treaties with England and Japan had made it altogether improbable that in the course of the next ten years there would be any further effort to alter the *status quo* in the Far East and the Middle East. There was the greater possibility of Russian power making itself felt in the Near East before the expiration of many more years.

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The Macedonian question with all its perils was already a subject for diplomacy. There was doubtless some fear of the ultimate possibilities of the Anglo-Russian agreement. Baron Aehrenthal must have felt that if it was not easy to act, it would be dangerous to wait. Yet a little while, and the military power of Russia might be efficiently re-established. She might be in a position to win the more decisive support of the British Empire. In the meantime Bulgaria might continue its rapid acquisition of a disproportionate increase in relative strength. The interests of that race, as we have seen, can by no method be so certainly promoted as by Macedonian reform. To these considerations must be added the two great personal factors upon which so much in the destinies of the Hapsburg and the Ottoman dominions may depend. Francis Joseph celebrates in the coming months the sixtieth year of his reign, and he is closely approaching the eightieth year of his age. Even men who are not pessimists reckon, inevitably and wisely with the certainty that an inestimable life cannot help effectually for a

very much longer period the purposes of the world's peace. And perhaps this is not the most serious reflection of its kind. Despite the phosphorescent brilliancy of his recent diplomatic achievements, Abdul Hamid is in decay, and many of those who are best acquainted with the atmosphere of Yildiz do not believe that the Sultan will live very long. This far more than the possibilities connected with a change of Sovereigns in the Dual Monarchy is what opens a vista of the gravest peril. No man can at present conceive how the tottering fortunes of the House of Othman are to be sustained after the disappearance of the master of wiles, whose indomitable obstinacy and fertility in expedients have wrought a marvellous if temporary change in the political and military position of the Turkish race. Thirty years ago a Russian army was encamped over against the very walls of Constantinople, and the prize dreamed of for centuries by Muscovite imagination seemed almost within grasp at last. Now, after the lapse of a single generation, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian power for all strategical purposes is driven further from Constantinople than it stood in the reign of Catherine the Great. The next Sultan may not continue the views of the present *régime* at Yildiz. It is in any case improbable that even continuity of policy would be interpreted by continuity of skill.

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There is always a chance, as Vienna is well aware, that a sufficiently resolute and able procedure upon the part of Russia and England acting in concert might detach the Ottoman Empire altogether from its present connections with the Wilhelmstrasse and the Ballplatz. Or an autonomous Macedonia might be definitely created. In these more formidable circumstances of the time to come Italy could act in Albania with greater power than now. This train of reflection must have passed through Baron Aehrenthal's mind, no matter what may have been the relative weight attached to the various links in the chain of reasoning we have followed. If Austria cherished a decisive desire to hold a mortgage upon Salonika and, indeed, upon Macedonia at large, it must be apparent from the point of view of Vienna that it was very high time to make a new departure even at certain risk. Looking at the matter in that realistic light, there has been already too much delay. The rapidity of Russia's recovery has taken Hapsburg statesmanship by surprise. It must have become clear that the tacit claim to the reversion of Macedonia and extension to the Aegean had to be asserted without further loss of time if any effective action were to be taken before the convalescence of Russian power becomes complete. The Balkan compromise has ceased to exist, because that instrument could no longer maintain the *status quo*. That condition was being undermined by the benevolent action of all the Powers, including ourselves, and by the growth towards nationhood of the Bulgarian race. Yet it must be apparent that calculations at the Ballplatz have been disconcerted by the promptitude and sureness of the Russian riposte.

The meaning of the new situation was grasped instantly at St. Petersburg.

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For some years speculation has played, chiefly in Paris, with the scheme of a trans-Balkan railway under Russian auspices, cutting clean across the vital line of Teutonic enterprise in the Near East. This scheme is now taken up and advocated with every appearance of determination by the journals upon both the Neva and the Seine which may be supposed to represent M. Isvolsky's views or feelings. We shall be fairly safe in concluding that there is an exaggerated definiteness in these patched-up schemes of hasty reprisals. Without the consent of Austria-Hungary, no trans-Balkan line could end at Antivari, where Austria has a prior right of construction. "Montenegro," says Article XXIX. of the Berlin Treaty, "shall come to an understanding with Austria-Hungary on the right to construct and keep up across the new Montenegrin territory a road and a railway." But no such veto applies to the port of San Giovanni di Medua, a little further south on the Albanian coast. "Land-locked Serbia would then find her long-sought outlet on the sea at this unpretending spot," as Mr. William Miller wrote in his excellent volume ten years ago. From the Adriatic the line would run to Rodujevatz on the Danube, and thence through Roumania to Odessa. But another route would be opened straight across the Balkans from Medua to Varna; the point of bifurcation would be at Nish in Serbia; and as the Orient express already runs through that town, and the southward line branches thence to Salonika, the town of Nish would become a railway centre of no less vital importance to the Balkans than is Harbin to Manchuria. There is no evidence that St. Petersburg has thought out this scheme. It may have been threatened vigorously in the hope of inducing Baron Aehrenthal to cancel the Novi-Bazar project. But if Austria is determined to have her link line, the scheme for crossing it by the trunk route from the Danube to the Adriatic will be pushed in earnest.

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If all self-denying ordinances are at an end, the Tsardom cannot afford to be passive. There will not be war to-day nor to-morrow. But there is a reopened rivalry, and there will be an intensifying antagonism with an ominous pressure of anxiety upon nations. The cloud upon the Eastern horizon is scarce bigger than a man's hand as yet, but it is the forerunner of such possibilities of over-spreading storm that it has seemed best to devote our pages this month to a study of the Balkan situation in exclusion of every other topic. Russia, however, still shows that failure to concentrate upon the one thing essential which has been in the past the weakness both of her national temperament and of her diplomacy. If a great Black Sea fleet existed, Constantinople would be even nearer the grasp of the Tsars at no very distant date than it seemed for a short period thirty years ago.

ON THE POTTLECOMBE CORNICE.

A STORY.

BY HOWARD OVERING STURGIS.

SOME of us who have never ridden in a stage coach, nor had a letter franked by a member of Parliament, who are, in short, in that decent middle of the road of life spoken of by the poet, can yet remember Pottlecombe as a tiny collection of fishermen's huts lying snugly in the bottom of the combe which took its name from its supposed resemblance to a fruit basket or pottle. Nothing was easier in passing along the high road than to miss the rough cart track, which, after climbing a steep hill, descended abruptly to the little fishing village. Those who paused on the crest saw partially-wooded hillsides slanting steeply on either hand, and in front a V-shaped patch of sea, against which some tuft of flowering gorse or a great plume of bracken would be sharply outlined in strong contrast of colour. Down in the bottom a thin line of smoke would come curling up, or a brown sail flap in the sunlight as a boat put forth to sea.

But the march of progress has invaded even this sequestered spot. A poetess built herself a cottage just above the village, in the height of the then prevailing fashion, with gables and turrets, and no two windows alike. Other villas in the same style as "The Nest" began to crop up here and there on the hillside, the road was widened and improved, a post office and a shop appeared as though by magic in the village street, and, last of all, a little crescent of lodging-houses traced its horns upon the slope opposite to the poetess, who uttered shrieks of horror at this profanation of the happy valley. Ten short years had sufficed for all these changes, when some local Haussmann conceived the plan of a terrace road, to start just below "The Nest" and wind along the face of the hill towards the sea, following the rise and fall of the coast, and gradually working round to Twistmouth, which all this while had lain within a bare two miles, though more than five remote by the old inland high road.

The name of the new thoroughfare was the subject of anxious thought with its promoters. "The Parade," "The Marina," "Madeira," were in turn suggested, discussed, and rejected. It was felt by many that the poetess was the proper person to christen this topping achievement of the valley's development; it was known that she was not in entire harmony with the movement, but the fact that no one had made any money by the scheme so reconciled this gifted woman to the innovation that she ascended the almost finished road the day before its opening, and stood